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One of Camatech's
Elliott Matsuura MX-520
5-axis machines.

Diversified capabilities DRIVE GROWTH

Since being established in May 2000, Camatech Inc. (www.camatech.ca) has become a key supplier of general aviation, industrial and alternative fueling components to a number of Canadian high technology companies. The company operates from a 13,000-square-foot facility in Acton, Ont., and has a team of 18.

The secret to many shops' success today has been to have at least one spe-

cialty product. Camatech Inc.'s has had two such products – a natural gas regulator and a hydrogen fuel cell regulator.

"We were involved at the inception phase for both of these products," notes Ed Smith, president of the company and one of three partners in the business. "These have kept us going through the recession years. The natural gas used in cars, busses and trucks operates at a pressure of 3,500 psi, the hydrogen operates

at 10,000 psi, so the seals are critical on these parts – near perfect, defect-free surfaces are a must."

Precision machining has been the mainstay of this company's business since it was launched by Smith and partners Bill Konduros and Paul Culumovic. They started with three lathes and one mill. They now have seven of each, including two new Elliott Matsuura MX-520 5-axis machines, and a Zeiss



Camatech's Zeiss Contura CMM in operation.

Contura CMM. Camatech makes anywhere from 5 to 500 pieces per product run (although in one or two cases they do as many as 12,000 parts at a time). They machine all conventional alloys and plastics, as well as super alloys such as Inconel, titanium and tool steels.

Quality production has helped keep Camatech busy. "We still have most of the customers we had when we started," Ed notes. "The challenge now is that margins keep getting tighter. We haven't been able to raise prices, so to improve our margins we've had to improve our processes. But it comes to a point where you've got the processes down pat and there are no improvements left to make."

To create more opportunities for the shop, which runs two shifts, Camatech is working to diversify its offerings. "We've completed our AS9100 certification now so that we can do more in the aerospace sector," says Ed. "We do some general aviation work right now, but this certification will open doors for us in the com-

mercial aviation sector. That's why having the 5-axis capability is so important."

The other challenge for a mature shop like Camatech is finding the right skill sets among new hires.

"For instance, we have one 5-axis expert who moved away to Quebec, we have retained his services to do our programming," says Paul. "We have one other 5-axis expert we hired just a few months ago, but finding people coming out of this recession has been difficult."

Elliott Matsuura has made it easier for the Camatech team to get ramped up – not only on the 5-axis, but on much of their other equipment as well.

"Elliott helped us finance our first machine purchase 11 years ago, and it was just seamless," says Ed. "From that point on, everything on the mill side has been bought through Elliott. We have no problems with reliability, and when it comes to service, they're just a phone call away. We've considered other machine tools, but then Elliott seems to give us an offer

we can't refuse and we stick with them."

The team considers aerospace an ideal industry to grow into, and that makes their equipment list an important consideration. "Aerospace companies want certain capabilities in your shop," notes Bill. "That is why we've invested in the CMM and our two 5-axis machines."

The challenge will continue to be finding new blood that can pick up and run with the diverse list of products Camatech produces.

"A lot of machinists in Southern Ontario are from high volume industries where you tend to do one thing all the time," says Paul. "So, we might have someone come in saying that they have 10-15 years of experience, but the breadth of experience is too narrow."

"Here, you've got to think outside the box," Ed explains. "We don't get any work here that's easy. Let's face it, there is no easy work out there anymore. 'Hands-on-now know-how' is what we need in machinists."